



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

3D BATTALION, 8TH MARINE REGIMENT
MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE-WEST
I MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE (FORWARD)
UNIT 73275
FPOAE 09509-3275

IN REPLY REFER TO:

5757

G-3

01 Aug 06

From: Commanding Officer, 3d Battalion, 8th Marines
To: Commandant of the Marine Corps (HDH-4)
Via: Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force (FORWARD)

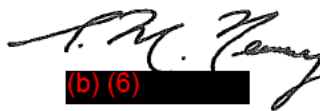
Subj: 3D BATTALION, 8TH MARINES COMMAND CHRONOLOGY

Encl: (1) 3d Battalion, 8th Marines Command Chronology for the month
of July 2006.

1. The 3d Battalion, 8th Marines Command Chronology covers the period from 1 July to 31 July 2006. Classified documents pertinent to the conduct of combat operations during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) 05-07, to include the 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, are available on the I MEF (Fwd) classified website: www.mnfw.usmc.smil.mil. Copies of these critical documents will accompany the final command chronology. 3d Battalion, 8th Marines will continue to submit subsequent command chronologies on a monthly basis while deployed to OIF 05-07.

2. Digital signature / document scanner not available.

3. Point of contact for this submission is (b) (6) at
TAC (b) (6), (b) (6)


(b) (6)

Command Chronology 01 JUL 06 to 31 JUL 06
Section I: Administration

UNIT DESIGNATION

Reporting Unit Code: 12230

Location: Hurricane Point, Ar Ramadi, Iraq

PERSONNEL INFORMATION

COMMANDING OFFICER

(b) (6) 01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

(b) (6) 01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06

SUBORDINATE COMMANDERS

INDIA COMPANY

(b) (6) 01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06

KILO COMPANY

(b) (6) 01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06

LIMA COMPANY

(b) (6) 01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06

WEAPONS COMPANY

(b) (6) 01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06

H & S COMPANY

(b) (6) 01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06

PRINCIPAL STAFF MEMBERS

S-1

(b) (6) 01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06

S-2

(b) (6) 01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06

S-3

(b) (6) 01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06

S-3A

(b) (6) 01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06

S-4

(b) (6) 01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06

S-6

(b) (6) 01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06

AIR OFFICER

(b) (6) 01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06
(b) (6) 09 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06

FACS		
(b) (6)		01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06
		01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06
BATTALION SURGEON		
(b) (6)		01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06
MEDICAL OFFICER		
(b) (6)		01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06
BN GUNNER		
(b) (6)		01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06
CHAPLAIN		
(b) (6)		01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06
COMMAND HISTORIAN		
(b) (6)		01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06
SERGEANT MAJOR AND SENIOR ENLISTED		
SERGEANT MAJOR		
(b) (6)		01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06
S-3 CHIEF		
(b) (6)		01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06
INDIA COMPANY		
(b) (6)		01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06
KILO COMPANY		
(b) (6)		01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06
LIMA COMPANY		
(b) (6)		01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06
WEAPONS COMPANY		
(b) (6)		01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06
H & S COMPANY		
(b) (6)		01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06
MEDICAL		
(b) (6)		01 JUL 06 - 31 JUL 06

AVERAGE TASK FORCE STRENGTH

MARINE OFFICER: 49

MARINE ENLISTED: 862

NAVY OFFICER: 4

NAVY ENLISTED: 56

CIVILIAN: 4

ARMY OFFICER: 1

ARMY ENLISTED: 14

AIR FORCE ENLISTED: 1

AVERAGE TOTAL STRENGTH: 990

LEGAL

BATTALION NJPS: 4

SUMMARY COURT MARTIALS: 5

SPECIAL COURT MARTIALS: 0

GENERAL COURT MARTIALS: 0

INVESTIGATIONS: 5 TOTAL: 1 EOF, 3 LINE OF DUTY MISCONDUCT, 1 LAW OF WAR VIOLATION

DETENTION OPERATIONS: 34 DETAINEES PROCESSED

LEGAL ASSISTANCE: 19 MARINES

AWARDS APPROVED BY THE BN CO

LETTERS OF APPRECIATION: 0

MERITORIOUS MASTS: 1

CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION: 98

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL: 100

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL WITH COMBAT "V": 14

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS COMMENDATION MEDAL: 0

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS COMMENDATION MEDAL WITH COMBAT "V": 3

Command Chronology 01 JUL 06 to 31 JUL 06
Section II: Narrative Summary

S-2

During the month of July the comprehensive link analysis database was used to target key facilitators and leaders of the insurgency that were identified last month. The link analysis chart has proven to be an important tool in targeting. It readily identifies and visually portrays human targets and the insurgent cell they operate in. In conjunction with this analysis, human targeting has been refined to the point where there is a multi faceted test that a target must pass before it becomes an active target. This process helps to mitigate the IED threat and helps to filter out lower echelon operatives in favor of leadership targets. Through the link analysis, coupled with an accurate census of parts of the city, certain active enemy cells have been disrupted in areas that were once considered untouched by Coalition Forces. For example, activity around checkpoint 295 diminished in the past weeks as members of certain cells have been disrupted and detained.

As 3/8's tenure is coming to an end in Ramadi, certain trends and characteristics of the enemy have shifted. For instance, due to the recent "surge" operation the enemy has shifted tactics to target mounted patrols and logistical convoys, as opposed to complex attacks against fixed coalition force positions.

The insurgents throughout the city are believed to have a strong grasp on petroleum import, export, and sale throughout the city. This grasp is believed to provide a large sum of the profits the insurgents utilize to launch their guerilla campaign against Coalition Forces. ISR support for the month of July was almost solely dedicated to reconnaissance of such sites. The ultimate goal of such reconnaissance was to launch a mission in mid-August to disrupt the funding insurgents are utilizing from the petroleum sites. This operation is still in the planning phases.

Lately, a main focus of the intelligence shop has been to get ready to turn over information to 1/6, the battalion relieving 3/8. The main points of the turnover have been targeting, as well as trend analysis and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). Comprehensive link analysis, targeting, and trend analysis, were key factors in the success of the 3/8 Intelligence Shop. Over the next month the focus will be to pass these skills over to the incoming 1/6 Intelligence Shop.

S-3

The Operations Section continued to support enduring tasks within the 3/8 battle space. The enduring tasks in zone consisted of: mounted/dismounted patrols, snap vehicle checkpoints, ambush patrols, over watch positions, fixed site security, census patrols, mosque monitoring, and cordon and searches. The Combat Operations Center (COC) provided command and control to several significant events throughout the battle space. These significant events include Iraqi Police (IP) screenings, multiple complex attacks against fixed site positions, and detainment of possible insurgents within the battle space.

During the month of July the Battalion focused on securing the Ramadi General Hospital and the establishment of OP Hawk. Following the successful establishment of OP Hawk, the battle space and

boundaries were changed to reflect the securing of the Ramadi Hospital as well as the establishment of OP Hawk and OP Sunset.

On 04 July, higher headquarters approved the mission to secure and clear the Ramadi General Hospital. The Assistant Operations Officer served as the Operations Officer for the Bravo Command Element executing the mission. The Operations Officer provided command and control for all of the Battalion's forces from the Combat Operations Center on Hurricane Point. On the morning of 05 July 2006, the hospital was cleared and secured.

After the securing of the hospital the Operations Officer served as the primary action officer for the establishment of OP Hawk. OP Hawk was established to allow a continued Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police presence in this district. Prior to the establishment of OP Hawk, this area was an insurgent controlled area within the city. OP Hawk was a key factor in allowing the local populace to utilize the hospital without the threat of insurgent activity. The Operations Officer supervised the overall engineering, flow of forces, and all internal/external coordination to establish this new combat outpost. By 10 July 2006, OP Hawk had adequate force protection allowing the Operations Officer to turn all future coordination over to the responsible Company Commander.

On approximately 08 July 2006, the Battalion established OP Sunset in order to mitigate IED's along Sunset Road. The establishment of this OP required the Operations Section to conduct coordination with adjacent units. The Operations Officer conducted extensive coordination of the battle space and re-configured the existing boundaries to facilitate cross boundary coordination with the adjacent unit.

The Operations Officer assisted in the delivery of aviation ordnance on one occasion, while conducting operations in the COC. This ordnance consisted of (1) 20mm strafing run on 22 July. Debriefs and After Actions were conducted within the S-3 following each significant event. The Forward Air Controllers (FAC) continued to rotate every eight days through OP Horea. The FAC's continue to support TF Dagger missions and Battalion quick reaction force missions as required. The FAC's continue to support enduring task in zone.

Towards the end of the month the Operations Section held a section coordination meeting for future planning guidance and redeployment requirements. The S-3 published the Reset the Force FRAGO. The Marines of the Operations Section cycled through the required classes. The S-3/Future Plans cell focused its final planning efforts in July on refinement of AT/FP at Ramadi General Hospital, OP Hawk, and redeployment letters of instruction. The S-3 and S-3A completed the redeployment guidance for all sections and companies. The Operations Section also presented the "Way Ahead" for the rest of the deployment to all commanders and staff at the final Battle Update Brief for the month of July.

S-4

The S-4 section successfully supported major offensive operations in Ar Ramadi during the month of July. In that same time, the S-4 has thoroughly processed administrative matters ranging from the turnover of Snake Pit to the Iraqi Army (IA) to receiving a Battalion (rein) worth of vehicles.

July marked the largest offensive operation of 3d Battalion, 8th Marines deployment in Ar Ramadi. Starting 04 July, the Battalion

secured Ramadi Hospital and then established OP Hawk in the North East corner of the battle space. Logistics played a large role in this operation and the S-4 ensured the missions success by producing a detailed matrix and executing it in a precise, organized manner. The requirement for supplies at OP Hawk also created an additional enduring task for the S-4.

On 31 July, the S-4 provided oversight on the events surrounding Snake Pit's turnover to the IA. The preparation for this event and the requirements associated with it took several months to facilitate with the majority of the work being completed in the month of July.

The vehicles received from MEF in the month of July allowed each company to discard all Theater Provided Equipment (TPE) rolling stock in their position. In turn, they received new M1114 Up Armor HMMWV's with Blue Force Tracker and inter-vehicle audio systems. A majority of the TPE vehicles were transferred to Army units allowing the S-4 to remove it from the records.

Also during the month of July, the S-4 supported the creation of the redeployment TPFDD, facilitated the transfer of four M113's to Hurricane Point, collected unit embark data, distributed gravel to various OP's, and provided security for a convoy to Camp Fallujah.

The Maintenance Management Section focused on Special Equipment Items (SEI) and convoy support to and from Al-Tagaddum (TQ). The focus for inducting this gear is based around the newly developed SEI Company in Combat Logistics Regiment Fifteen. While this company was set up to induct special gear onto the inventory, the documentation process is still being developed. The support for movement to TQ has been provided purely from Bravo Company, 54th Engineers. The runs are now conducted approximately twice every three weeks. The MIMMS Reports have continued to grow due to a large maintenance push to repair any gear that 1/6 might utilize. SL-3 and Gun Book inventories were conducted to begin to ensure end items were complete. In total, the Maintenance Section has remained busy in an effort to reconcile and document all maintenance procedures and items in the maintenance cycle.

The Supply Section assisted in filling over 450 rapid requests for the Battalion and other units operating in Ar Ramadi. The ability to fill these requests is reflected by a 95% completion rate. Supply also renewed and reworked the TOIFOR life support and waste disposal contract and the Wolfpack generator and maintenance contract. The contracts were valued at \$832,770 and \$468,051, respectively. Supply requisition \$3.5 million worth of supplies and materials and acquired more than \$2 million worth of contracted items through the WOPRR system.

The Field Mess Section continued to support 600 plus Marines by providing three meals per day. Two of these meals were prepared and served hot to the Marines and Sailors on Hurricane Point, Snake Pit and ECP's. Every four days, the Mess Section pushed dry goods and water to Government Center and OP Horea in support of Kilo and India Companies, respectively. Everyday, two Mess Marines prepared and accompanied chow from Camp Ramadi to Hurricane Point. Field Mess also provided additional support to Gov Center and OP VA.

During July, the Motor Transport Section received sixty-two M1114 Up Armored HMMWVs with Chameleons. Motor Transport personnel picked up each vehicle from the CLB-5 lot, provided a Limited Technical Inspection, secured the fill needed to operate the Chameleon, coordinated with 46th Engineers for turret modifications, and staged the vehicles for pickup by company or detachment. The Motor Transport Section also conducted over 165 repairs and replaced twenty-five cab

bushings on the Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement (MTVR). Motor Transport successfully evacuated twenty vehicles to Al-Taqaddum (TQ) and the 501st Army unit on Camp Ramadi for 3d echelon support. In July, Motor Transport personnel also facilitated the retrograde of thirty-eight M1123 HMMWVs to the Dogwood lot in TQ.

The Armory repaired fifty-two weapons and sixty-one optics in the month of July. There were over twelve mortar tubes that received calibrations and rebuilt Gun Books from the Infantry Weapons Section of Combat Logistics Regiment Fifteen. The Armory continued to provide attachments to support each companies Armory custodian as needed. Armory personnel also sent contact teams to the Government Center to provide maintenance on mission essential crew-served weapon systems on various posts at the beginning and end of the month.

Combat Train conducted over forty-two convoys in which they provided security for over ten convoys tasked with transporting Class IV to OP Hawk. Between July 4 and July 7, while conducting Operation General Hospital and establishing OP Hawk, Combat Trains was subject to six different coordinated attacks in Ar Ramadi. Combat Trains provided follow on support every three days by re-supplying OP Hawk and transporting Iraqi Police (IP) in support of their Relief in Place (RIP). Combat Trains also received attacks on two recovery assets in a matter of five days. In each case, the wrecker was targeted by one or more Improvised Explosive Device (IED) resulting in a mobility kill on both vehicles.

Log Train continued to conduct runs to Hurricane Point and Snake Pit twice a day to deliver required logistical and life support. During the month of July, Log Train pushed over 60 pallets of water to HP along with over 12,000 gallons of JP-8. Three times a week, laundry was picked up and dropped off from Hurricane Point and Snake Pit. Additionally, the Log Train escorted PX personnel to both locations as laundry runs were conducted. Log Train transported the Lioness Team to and from North and South ECP on a daily basis. Log Train also continued to serve as the main shuttle between Snake Pit, Blue Diamond, Hurricane Point, North and South ECP and Camp Ramadi.

S-6

The EPLRS crypto changes done during this month were completed manually. The battalion possessed 5 EPLRS CYZ-10s, which allowed for data transfer devices to be distributed to all Battalion sites with EPLRS radios. Over the Air Rekey (OTAR) for the EPLRS network was not attempted because the battalion did not possess the key-tape that is required to conduct an OTAR.

The UHF radio nets were experiencing sporadic outages during the beginning of the month. The radio nets were monitored by two PRC-117 radios. The RF cables were re-run on 02 July in order to improve the RF signal getting to the antennas. The newly installed RF cables were shorter and were one continuous segment (vice several RF cables connected together) of RF cable.

The tech directive (TD) 040-06 was published on 02 July. TD 040-06 outlined the details of installing a MRC-142 link from Hurricane Point to OP VA. Its initial scheduled completion date was 04 July. Due to insufficient equipment, the Battalion was unable to complete the TD on the originally scheduled time. The wire section setup the MRC-142 that 3/8 received from 9th Communication Battalion and conducted preliminary testing. The tests were successful and proved that the

MRC-142s were operational. In depth testing could not be conducted until remaining equipment was sourced.

The missing items were picked up from Camp Fallujah on 22 July. The parts were setup in a closed network at Hurricane Point. After some diligent troubleshooting, a successful router to router connection was made. Classes were given by the wire section to the Lima Company radio operators on 23 July. The intent was to train them to the point where they were capable of maintaining the OP VA end of the MRC-142 link. The link was established on 24 July by a team of wire and data Marines. SIPR services and SIPR Voice over IP phones were setup at OP VA. 24 July marked the completion of TD 040-06. The installation of the MRC-142 link went without major problems. Initially the link would experience hour long outages a few times a day. As the Lima Company radio operators gained experience, the MRC-142 outages were shortened and avoided.

50 PRR headsets were put on order during the month of March. Over 90 days later, the headsets were still on back order. In order to expedite the process, the PRR headsets were open purchased. The SMU had a large quantity of them on hand. On 07 July, 60 PRR headsets were received from supply. When they arrived, there were all evenly distributed throughout the battalion. The companies had a significant number of unserviceable PRRs due to broken headsets. The lesson learned was that when a part is taking a long time to order through the maintenance cycle, it should be ordered through supply.

During the month of July, the data section re-installed CAT-5 cable throughout Hurricane Point. Many of the wire runs were disorderly. Re-running the CAT-5 and removing PVC pipes from the wire runs made the CAT-5 more accessible for troubleshooting.

On 21 July, a 4 Soldier army detachment established SIPR, NIPR, and Voice services at OP Hawk. The Brigade was willing to support data and phone services at OP Hawk due to the strategic importance of the OP and the General Hospital. The link was established without significant problems. The addition of a phone and SIPR at OP Hawk has proven to be invaluable.

Also on 21 July, there was a SIPR, NIPR, and Voice outage at Hurricane Point. The fiber running to Blue Diamond was cut. It was cut on Blue Diamond's side by shrapnel from a mortar. The emergency backup plan was executed. SIPR and voice services were restored over the MRC-142 within 3 hours. The outage would have been much shorter if there had not been a loose cable at the back of the MRC-142. Shortly thereafter, the fiber was repaired and services were transitioned back to the fiber.

On 22 July, the 3/8 SB-3865 went down for a few hours. The cause was an electrical short in the back panel of the SB-3865. A tech was able to repair the problem and all voice services were promptly restored.

On 27 July, a data and wire Marine assisted Lima Company in the transition of data and voice services from Snakepit to the JCC. The fiber and phone lines were re-routed to the new building. The data marine wired the interior of the JCC data lines.

During the latter half of the month, soft Voice over IP (VoIP) phones were installed across the 3/8 battlespace. Lima Company's Command Post at OP VA is only capable of calling with IP phones. A soft voice over IP phone was installed at the JCC in order to allow OP VA to talk to the JCC via telephone. The soft VoIPs were installed at each major OP in order to provide a redundant means of communication.

The month of July consisted of several notable communication architecture additions. First, OP Hawk was provided with SIPR, NIPR, and DNVN phones from an army Small Extension Node (SEN). Secondly, OP VA was given reliable SIPR and a VoIP phone through a MRC-142 link. The SIPR and DNVN phone at Snakepit was transitioned to the JCC. Finally, the number of voice over IP phones in the battalion increased from 3 to 9.

CHAPLAIN

The battalion Religious Ministry Team (RMT) provided ministry to three Marine KIA and four Marine WIA during the month of July, and conducted one memorial services. The RMT also provided Reset the Force training in Combat Stress Prevention, Suicide Prevention and Corps Values to all Marines and sailors. The Battalion Chaplain and RP visited and provided ministry to Marines and sailors at Government Center, South Entry Control Points, Camp Ramadi, Camp Blue Diamond, OP VA, OP Hawk and Snake Pit. Roman Catholic and Protestant services were facilitated for Hurricane Point and Snake Pit. Eastern Orthodox Services in support of Ramadi area were conducted at Hurricane Point and Camp Ramadi. Conducted twenty-one (21) marital counselings, twenty-nine (29) stress related counselings, and seven (7) grief related counselings. Toys, school, snacks and water supplies were also distributed to local Iraqi schools and continued coordination for charitable contributions to support local ministry in Iraq were also done. The RMT began preparations for Return and Reunion and Warrior Transition Training.

MEDICAL

The BAS continues to see sick call for the Marines of 3/8 as well as its attachments. The Enlisted Fleet Marine Force Warfare Specialist training productively continues. In order to accommodate the battalion's increased role in Ramadi, personnel from the BAS assisted with an assessment of the local hospital. Because of expansion of the battalion's area of responsibility a forward BAS was established at the newly constructed OP HAWK.

INDIA COMPANY

On 01 July, four Marines were promoted to Lance Corporal and two were promoted to Corporal. On 02 July, one Marine was combat meritoriously promoted to Lance Corporal. At 1410, OP Horea engaged a squad size insurgent group maneuvering around the Gay Palace in an effort to ambush a tank section. Marines positively identified the insurgents having AK-47s and one RPG. OP Horea reported three EKIA. At 1915, OP Horea positively identified three insurgents with AK-47s to the south of the OP. They also positively identified two insurgents with AK-47s in the vicinity of Smiley Face building. At that time OP Horea received small arms fire from the south and returned fire with 5.56 and 7.62. On 03 July at 1300, OP Horea received small arms fire from Gay Palace and returned with 7.62 and 40mm. On 04 July at 2230, India Company minus, reinforced, conducted Operation GENERAL HOSPITAL at the Ramadi Hospital. On 05 July, India company established OP Hawk. On 06 July, India 3 conducted CASEVAC for an Iraqi Policeman who was shot by one round of enemy precision fire. On 06 July at 2330, OP Hawk

positively identified one insurgent with an AK-47 traveling east on Nova. STA engaged with one round 5.56 resulting in one EKIA. On 07 July at 0200, India 3 conducted a security patrol at the hospital after receiving a report from the S-2 that several local nationals killed an Iraqi Policemen. India 3 detained (2) local nationals inside the hospital who matched the description given by the S-2. At 1700, while in an overwatch position in the vicinity of CP 341, India 1 reported receiving fire from the intersection of Y Rd and Sofia, and from south of CP 341. While traveling through the area, Combat Trains positively identified one insurgent with an AK-47 and engages with 7.62. All units are unable to conduct BDA. On 11 July at 2042, OP Hawk received light small arms fire from the south. Iraqi Police returned fire to the south. There were no casualties and no BDA was conducted. On 14 July at 2040, India 4 was patrolling out of OP Hawk in G9. While on patrol they received small arms fire from the vicinity of CP 341. One Iraqi Army soldier received shrapnel from a ricochet round. He was treated and OP Hawk. On 15 July, India Company completed Reset the Force training. At 2245 India 2 was conducting an overwatch position at the intersection of Y Rd and Goat Rd. While in overwatch they received two RPGs from the west and small arms fire from the north. India 2 positively identified four insurgents firing from west to east. India 2 returned fire with 70 5.56 link. No BDA was conducted. On 17 July at 0940, OP Hawk reports one RPG impacted an Iraqi Police check point resulting in one Iraqi Police KIA. India 2 takes the KIA to the medical facility aboard Camp Corrigador. At 1130 OP Hawk had an escalation of force in which a local national was traveling on foot from south to north on Goat Rd toward OP Hawk. Post 1 fired one white star cluster, and one warning shot at the local national. The local national continued toward OP Hawk. Post 1 engaged with one round 5.56 which grazed the local national in the head. Iraqi Police wrapped his head with a bandage, checked his identification card, and confirmed his as Maher Taha. Maher Taha was able to walk to the Ramadi Hospital on his own for further medical treatment. At 1245, Post 6 of OP Horea received five rounds of small arms fire. Post 6 engaged one insurgent at Dobber St and Pope St. No BDA was conducted. On 19 July at 1525, OP Hawk positively identified one insurgent with an AK-47 as he engaged the OP with ten rounds. OP Hawk returns fire with 20 round 5.56 link. No BDA was conducted. On 21 July at 2153, OP Hawk reports Ramadi Hospital taking small arms fire from the south. The Iraqi Police returned fire to the south with 350 rounds 7.62. There were no casualties and no BDA was conducted. On 22 July at 1750, Post 6 at OP Horea positively identified three insurgents with AK-47s crossing Pope St. Post 6 engaged with (20) rounds 7.62. No BDA was conducted. At 1837, Post 5 at OP Horea received one round. Post 5 could not identify the shooter and did not return fire. On 23 July at 1905, India 1 was conducting a water resupply out of OP Hawk. Once they reached the east side of the Ramadi Hospital, they were engaged from the west side of the hospital. The engagement resulted in one Iraqi Police WIA. India 1 conducted a medical evacuation of the Iraqi Police casualty to Camp Corrigador. On 24 July at 1403, OP Horea received enemy contact from Air Craft Carrier south and small arms fire from the Parking Garage. There were no casualties in the engagement. At 1919, India 7 convoy hit an IED at CP 295 resulting in a mobility kill to a vehicle and no casualties to Marines. India 7 towed the vehicle to OP Hawk. At 2313, India 7 convoy hit an IED at the east footbridge on Michigan. There was no damage to personnel or gear. On 27 July, India company awarded 12 Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals, and 4 Certificates of Commendation. At 2053; while in an overwatch position,

India 4 received 30 rounds of medium machine gun fire from south of the Ramadi Hospital. India 4 could not identify the shooter. At 2100, OP Horea engaged three insurgents with AK-47s on Pope St. No BDA was conducted. At 2107, India 4 received more medium machine gun fire from a no name alley. India 4 positively identified four insurgents with AK-47s running east to west and returned fire with 5.56 link. There were no casualties and no BDA was conducted.

KILO COMPANY

Kilo Company continued with enduring tasks of site security and continued fortification projects at the Government Center and at OP Sunset. Patrolling efforts consisted of mounted day and night patrols to the south and southwest of the Government Center to provide QRF and local security for the two fixed sites and to patrol dead space. Nightly dismounted over watch, and security patrols continued throughout the company's AO to provide additional security of fixed sites and for continued maintenance on ground sensors and cameras set up ISO observing CP 295.

On 02 July, the Government Center received two (2) 82mm mortar impacts and was engaged by eight (8) AIF in the vicinity of the Rasheed Hotel, and the 3 Blue A/C buildings. AIF were observed carrying assortment of RPG and AK-47 weapons and were engaged by all northern facing posts. After 30 minute firefight small arms fire ceased, but BDA could not be confirmed due to location and darkness.

On 14 July, Kilo Company completed preliminary fortification projects and became fully operational at OP Sunset. Observation Post Sunset was established to better observe and deter the emplacement of IED's along Sunset Road in support of TF 1-37 at COP Falcon.

On 18 July, Kilo Company sustained one (1) priority casualty while standing post in Post 6 at the Government Center. The Government Center received several enemy mortar rounds. The Marine in Post 6 received mortar shrapnel wounds. Kilo 4 conducted medevac to Charlie Medical with no further incident.

LIMA COMPANY

During the first week of July Lima re-organized into three dismounted platoons and one mounted platoon. Third platoon served as the mounted assault platoon. Snakepit was attacked by small arms fire on 02 July, resulting in no damage to personnel or equipment. Also on the second Lima 3 provided a ground medevac for an Iraqi Police Officer who was shot while guarding the Rafidan Bank. On 03 July, OPVA was attacked with 10-15 rounds of small arms fire with do damage incurred.

On the morning of the 05 July, Lima 2/2 was conducting a dismounted patrol and was hit by an improvised explosive device resulting in two routine casualties. After moving their casualties back to OPVA Lima 2/2 continued their mission to establish and ambush position along 17th street. Later that day Lima 4/3 was manning an ambush position in the vicinity of Give Me Road and Halfway Road and was engaged with 40-50 rounds of small arms fire but could not obtain PID. Shortly after, Lima 2/2 was attacked in their ambush position with sustained medium machine gun fire, 2 rocket propelled grenades, and small arms fire. Lima 2/2 returned fire with M249, MK32 grenade launcher, M16A4, and one LAW rocket. Soon afterwards, the enemy force displaced and they could not obtain BDA.

Concurrently during the first half of July, Lima readied FOB Snakepit for turnover. All hazardous materials and U.S. property was removed and a detailed cleanup was conducted. The final inspection by G7 occurred on 11 July with only minor discrepancies noted. On 15 July control of FOB Snakepit transferred from Lima Company 3/8 to the 2-1-7 Iraqi Army in small ceremony attended by the Battalion Commanders of 3/8 and 2-1-7 respectively. Following the turnover Lima Company repositioned two platoons to OPVA, one platoon to the JCC, and split its mobile platoon between Hurricane point and JCC.

The remainder of the month found Lima Company focusing their patrolling efforts in the D and G sectors. Also the company distributed over 20 generators to Iraqi homes within its company battle space. On 22 July the JCC was hit with one 82mm mortar round resulting in one local national routine casualty that was transported to Charlie Medical. The company received its final contact of the month on 25 July when OPVA received one round of precision rifle fire that resulted in one routine WIA.

WEAPONS

Throughout the month of July, Weapons Company continued disrupting and killing the insurgents in Ar Ramadi through the effective use of security patrols, SVCPS, and overwatch positions. The South ECP also continued to be a major deterrent to enemy activity in the AO. The company had multiple engagements throughout the month involving IEDs, RPGs, small arms, and medium machine gun fire.

On 04 and 05 July, Weapons Company played an important role in the clearing of the Ramadi General Hospital and the establishing of OP Hawk. Weapons Company conducted two IED clearing patrols with Task Force Dagger. The patrol, led by Weapons 6, cleared the route for Task Force Sumo and India Company to the hospital. The other IED clearing mission, led by Weapons 5, was used as a deception, clearing along Racetrack. Combined, the two patrols cleared three IEDs and allowed for the safe movement of the main effort to the objective area.

While conducting a security patrol in the Mulaab district, Weapons 3B sustained a complex attack on 22 July. At the intersection of 20th and Tourism, vehicle 1 struck an IED causing a mobility kill. Immediately following the IED they were heavily engaged by small arms and medium machine gun fire primarily from the south and the west. While Weapons 3B moved the casualties into a cleared house, the QRF was sent to their position with Weapons 6. The QRF and Weapons 1B, conducted the medavac of the one (1) priority WIA, leaving one vehicle and Weapons 6 at the scene to reinforce Weapons 3B. The secondary QRF, Weapons 1A, linked up with the wrecker vehicle at Camp Ramadi and began to move to Weapons 3B's location. En route the patrol struck two IEDs on MSR Michigan between the Government Center and OP Horea. The IEDs caused damages to the wrecker's transmission making it mission incapable. Weapons 1A left the wrecker at OP Horea and continued. Once on site, Weapons 1A provided cover and suppressing fire in order for Weapons 3B to self-tow the damaged vehicle to the Government Center. At the Government Center Weapons 3B link up with Weapons 1B, who had linked up with another recovery vehicle, and all weapons elements returned to base. The attack resulted in three (3) FWIA and at least eleven (11) EKIA.

Five days later on 27 July, Weapons 2B also sustained a complex attack resulting in three (3) FKIA and two (2) FWIA. At the intersection of South School and 20th, while on a security patrol, the

fourth vehicle was struck with an IED. As with the attack on 22 July, immediately following the IED the patrol became heavily engaged. Weapons 2B immediately called for QRF. Again Weapons 1B responded as QRF with Weapons 6 and moved to their position on 20th. Weapons 1B conducted the medavac of the casualties as Weapons 1A, as the secondary QRF, provided 360-degree mobile security for Weapons 2B. Combat Trains was dispatched with the wrecker, which again was damaged in transit, but continued until they got to the scene. While Combat Trains conducted the recovery additional units from the brigade provided reinforcements, 1-506 pushed elements to CP 296, TF 1-37AR moved to the south, and CAS was on station. Soon afterwards, all contact ceased. The vehicle was recovered and all elements returned to base.

H & S

Administratively, July has been the most intense month thus far. A primary focus throughout the Company was the writing and submission of end-of-tour awards. Hundreds of awards for deserving Marines were submitted by all sections and awarded towards the end of the month.

On 02 July, the Battalion received several Marines from the rear, members of 3/8 who deployed late due to medical issues. Due to the additional bodies, a new Guard Officer took over the Hurricane Guard Force on 05 July.

On 04 July, 3d Battalion, 8th Marines was tasked with securing the Ramadi General Hospital. Intelligence reported that the hospital was being used as a command and control node by AQI and an insurgent safe haven. The Bravo Command, also known as Task Force Sumo, led by the Battalion Executive Officer consisted of approximately 270 personnel to include Company I, Weapons Company, PSD, all Scout Sniper teams, components of each section, and multiple attachments. Some of the many personnel and sections from H&S that played a vital role were EOD, Military Working Dog (MWD) teams, the FACs, Chaplain, Medical Officer, and Company Gunnery Sergeant who was hand-selected to serve as the Marshalling Area Control Officer. The operation was conducted flawlessly and, upon completion, a new combat outpost, OP Hawk, was stood up by Company I. Throughout the duration of the month, the S-4, working in conjunction with the Combat Engineer Platoon and the Combat Train, provided daily Class V, VII, and VII supplies and significantly improved the force protection and quality of life at the COP.

Another major Battalion requirement assigned to the H&S Executive Officer was the Battalion Consolidated Memorandum Receipt (CMR) inventory and reconciliation. From 06-30 July, all armory, communication, and vehicle assets were identified and inventoried at all of the battalion's FOBs and Combat Outposts (COPs). On 31 July, a reconciliation of all accounts was conducted with the Supply Officer.

On 20 July, while conducting a dismounted insert, Scout Sniper Team 3 hit a pressure-switch IED, which resulted in one (1) Marine KIA. The Marine's family was properly notified and a memorial service was held on 25 July in the Hurricane Point Recreation Center.

During the last week of July, the Camp Mayor turned over the "boat house" to a platoon from Lima Company in preparation for the transfer of authority of Snake Pit from Company L to the Iraqi Army.

The activity of the Temporary Holding Facility remained low throughout the month. The battalion processed a total of 34 detainees, 20 of which were sent up to the RDF.

Command Chronology 01 JUL 06 to 31 JUL 06
Section III: Sequential Listing of Significant Events

<u>DATES</u>	<u>EVENTS</u>
02 JUL 06	LIMA 3 TRANSPORTS A WOUNDED IRAQI POLICE OFFICER TO CHARLIE MED AFTER HE WAS SHOT AT RAFIDAN BANK
02 JUL 06	OP HOREA ENGAGES SQUAD SIZE ELEMENT OF AIF. THREE (3) EKIA
02 JUL 06	COMPLEX ATTACK AT GOVERNMENT CENTER
04 JUL 06	OPERATION GENERAL HOSPITAL BEGINS
05 JUL 06	RAMADI HOSPITAL CLEARED AND SECURED
05 JUL 06	OP HAWK ESTABLISHED
05 JUL 06	IED STRIKE ON LIMA 2/2. TWO (2) FWIA
05 JUL 06	LIMA 2/2 COMPLEX ATTACK AT GIVE ME AND HALF WAY RD
06 JUL 06	IP MEDEVAC FROM OP HAWK
08 JUL 06	OP SUNSET ESTABLISHED
09 JUL 06	WEST RAMADI IP STATION HIT BY TWO 82MM MORTAR RND. FOUR (4) IP FWIA
10 JUL 06	OP HAWK HANDED OVER TO INDIA COMPANY
15 JUL 06	LIMA COMPANY TURNS OVER FOB SNAKE PIT TO 2-1-7 IA
18 JUL 06	IDF ATTACK ON GOVERNMENT CENTER. ONE (1) FWIA
20 JUL 06	IED STRIKE ON STA 3 RESULTS IN ONE (1) FKIA
21 JUL 06	FIBER OPTIC CABLE TO BLUE DIAMOND IS CUT BY ENEMY MORTAR RND
21 JUL 06	SIPR, NIPR, AND VOICE SERVICES ESTABLISHED AT OP HAWK
22 JUL 06	ONE 20MM STRAFING RUN ON IED EMPLACERS
22 JUL 06	JCC TAKES SINGLE 82MM RND. ONE IRAQI NATIONAL WOUNDED
22 JUL 06	COMPLEX ATTACK ON WEAPONS CO. AT 20 TH AND TOURISM STREET. ATTACK RESULTS IN THREE (3) WIA AND ELEVEN (11) EKIA
27 JUL 06	COMPLEX ATTACK ON WEAPONS CO. AT SOUTH SCHOOL AND 20 TH STREET. ATTACK RESULTS IN THREE (3) FKIA AND TWO (2) FWIA.
30 JUL 06	CMR COMPLETE

Command Chronology 01 JUL 06 to 31 JUL 06
Section IV: Supporting Documents

Enclosures

- (1) "Iraq: Restrained Ramadi offensive suggests US charm" IRIN, 04 July, 2006. IRIN
- (2) "In Ramadi, Fetid Quarters and Unrelenting Battles" Dexter Filkins, July 05, 2006. New York Times
- (3) "US, Iraqi troops raid hospital to hunt insurgents" Reuters, 05 July, 2006. Reuters
- (4) "Lighter Touch in Ramadi" Julian E. Barnes, 12 July, 2006. New York Times

MARES Reportable Equipment:

TAMCN	NOMENCLATURE	AUTH	ONHAND	QTY DEF
A0067	AN/MRC-148	5	9	0
A0425	M-DACT	11	11	0
A0918	AN/PSC-5	1	1	0
A1225	EPLRS NETWORK MAN	0	2	0
A1935	AN/MRC-138	0	5	0
A1955	AN/MRC-142	2	1	1
A1957	AN/MRC-145	7	13	0
A2042	AN/PRC-150	8	13	0
A2043	MBITR URBAN VER	0	92	0
A2044	MBITR MARITIME VERS	120	7	113
A2068	AN/PRC-117F	8	6	0
A2069	AN/PRC-113 (V) 3	0	4	0
A2070	AN/PRC-119/A	139	68	0
A2074	AN/VRC-88D	0	21	0
A2075	AN/VRC-89D	0	2	0
A2078	AN/VRC-92D	0	4	0
A2079	AN/PRC-119F	0	46	0
A2152	AV/VSQ2C (EPLRS)	15	20	0
A2167	AN/VRC-88	59	14	0
A2168	AN/VRC-89	50	1	1
A2169	AN/VRC-90	2	2	6
A2505	SB-3614 (V)/TT	0	2	0
A2508	SWITHING TELEPHONE AUTO	3	1	0
A8100	AK648/U	17	24	0
B0012	AIR COND 1800BTU/HR 60HZ1		1	0
B0589	EXCAVATOR, ACE	1	1	0
B0730	MEP-016B GENERATOR	9	9	0
B0891	MEP-803 GENERATOR, 10KW	9	9	0
B0953	MEP-805 GENERATOR, 30KW	1	1	0
B1021	MEP-806 GENERATOR, 60KW	1	1	0
B1580	SIXCON FUEL MOD	2	2	0
B2085	SIXCON FUEL TK	4	2	1
B2460	TRACTOR, FULL TRACK	1	1	0
B2462	TRACTOR, FULL TRACK D7G	0	1	1
B2483	LOADER BACKHOE CAT420D	1	1	0
B2561	EXTENDABLE BOOM FORKLIFT1		1	0
B2566	TRUCK, FORKLIFT 4000LBS	1	1	0
B2567	TRACTOR, ARTICULATING	2	1	0
D0001	UAH TRUCK UTILITY 4X4	138	137	0

D0003	AMK 23	30	26	0
D0004	AMK 25	6	6	0
D0880	M149 WATER TRAILER	6	8	0
D1001	TRK AMB, HMMWV M997	2	2	0
D1002	TRK AMB HMMWV, M1035	3	3	1
D1073	TRUCK, DUMP, MTRV	2	2	0
D1125	TRK HMMWV TOW CARR M10454		4	4
D1158	TRK CARGO, HMMWV M1123	45	44	0
D1213	MTRV WRECKCER/MK36	2	1	0
E0180	CIRCLE AIMING M2A2	4	5	0
E0207	COMMAND LAUNCH, M98A1	8	8	0
E0330	AN/UAS-12C A/C	8	8	0
E0915	SMAW MK153	21	21	0
E0935	LAUNCHER TOW, M220E4	8	8	0
E0980	MACH GUN, CAL .50 M2	30	26	0
E0989	MACH GUN, 240G 7.62MM	85	53	0
E0994	MACH GUN, 40MM MK-19	30	30	0
E1065	MORTAR, 60MM, M224	9	12	0
E1095	MORTAR, 81MM, M252	8	8	0
E1460	RIFLE, SNIPER M40A3	0	9	0
E1475	RIFLE, SNIPER .50 CAL	0	2	0
E1911	TOW TEST SIGHT/ TSM-152	2	2	0
E1912	TOW TEST SIGHT/ TSM-140B2		1	1

INSURGENCY HOTBED

In Ramadi, Fetid Quarters and Unrelenting Battles



Joao Silva for The New York Times

The provincial Government Center in Ramadi is defended by the Third Battalion, Eighth Marine Regiment. [More Photos >](#)

By **DEXTER FILKINS**

Published: July 5, 2006

RAMADI, Iraq, July 4 — The Government Center in the middle of this devastated town resembles a fortress on the wild edge of some frontier: it is sandbagged, barricaded, full of men ready to shoot, surrounded by rubble and enemies eager to get inside.

The American marines here live eight to a room, rarely shower for lack of running water and defecate in bags that are taken outside and burned.

The threat of snipers is ever present; the marines start running the moment they step outside. Daytime temperatures hover around 120 degrees; most foot patrols have been canceled because of the risk of heatstroke.

The food is tasteless, the windows boarded up. The place reeks of urine and too many bodies pressed too close together for too long.

"Hey, can you get somebody to clean the toilet on the second floor?" one marine yelled to another from his office. "I can smell it down here."

And the casualties are heavy. Asked about the wounded under his command, Capt. Andrew Del Gaudio, 30, of the Bronx, rattled off a few.

"Let's see, Lance Corporal Tussey, shot in the thigh.

"Lance Corporal Zimmerman, shot in the leg.

"Lance Corporal Sardinas, shrapnel, hit in the face.

"Lance Corporal Wilson, shrapnel in the throat."

"That's all I can think of right now," the captain said.

So it goes in Ramadi, the epicenter of the Iraqi insurgency and the focus of a grinding struggle between the American forces and the guerrillas.

In three years here the Marine Corps and the Army have tried nearly everything to bring this provincial capital of 400,000 under control. Nothing has worked.

Now American commanders are trying something new.

Instead of continuing to fight for the downtown, or rebuild it, they are going to get rid of it, or at least a very large part of it.

They say they are planning to bulldoze about three blocks in the middle of the city, part of which has been reduced to ruins by the fighting, and convert them into a Green Zone, a version of the fortified and largely stable area that houses the Iraqi and American leadership in Baghdad.

The idea is to break the bloody stalemate in the city by ending the struggle over the battle-scarred provincial headquarters that the insurgents assault nearly every day. The Government Center will remain, but the empty space around it will deny the guerrillas cover to attack. "We'll turn it into a park," said Col. Sean MacFarland.

Ramadi, a largely Sunni Arab city, is regarded by American commanders as the key to securing Anbar Province, now the single deadliest place for American soldiers in Iraq. Many neighborhoods here are only nominally controlled by the Americans, offering sanctuaries for guerrillas.

While the focus in Baghdad and other large Iraqi cities may be reconciliation or the political process, here it is still war. Sometimes the Government Center is assaulted by as many as 100 insurgents at a time.

Last week a midnight gun battle between a group of insurgents and American marines lasted two hours and ended only when the Americans dropped a laser-guided bomb on an already half-destroyed building downtown. Six marines were wounded; it was unclear what happened to the insurgents.

"We go out and kill these people," said Captain Del Gaudio, the commander here. "I define success as continuing to kill the enemy to allow the government to work and for the Iraqi Army to take over."

Government Mostly in Name

That day seems a long way off. The Iraqi government exists here in little more than name. Last week about \$7 million disappeared from the Rafidain Bank — most of the bank's deposits — right under the nose of an American observation post next door. An Iraqi police officer was shot in the face and dumped in the road, his American ID card stuck between his fingers.

The governor of the province, Mamoun Sami Rashid al-Alwani, still goes to work here under an American military escort. But many of the province's senior officials deserted him after the kidnapping and beheading of his secretary in May.

The previous governor was assassinated, as was the chairman of the provincial council, Khidir Abdel Jabar Abbas, in April. At a meeting of the provincial cabinet last week, only six of 36 senior officials showed up.

"The terrorists want to keep Anbar people out of the government," said Taha Hameed Mokhleef, the director general for highways, who went into hiding last

month when his face appeared on an American-backed television station here showing him in his job. He has since re-emerged. "My friends told me that the terrorists were planning to kill me, so I went to Jordan for a while," he said.

The Iraqi police patrol the streets in only a handful of neighborhoods, the ones closest to the American base. In the slow-motion offensive that has been unfolding, in which the Americans have been gradually clearing individual neighborhoods, nearly all of the fighting has been done by American marines and soldiers, not the Iraqi Army.

The 800-member Third Battalion, Eighth Marine Regiment, which until recently was responsible for holding most of the city on its own, has lost 11 marines since arriving in March. Commanders declined to disclose the number of wounded. Over all in Iraq the number of American wounded in action is roughly seven times the number killed.

Be Polite, and Ready to Kill

One of the "habits of mind" drilled into the marines from posters hung up inside: "Be polite, be professional and have a plan to kill everyone you meet."

The humor runs dark, too. On a sheet of paper hung up in the Government Center, marines wrote down suggestions for their company's T-shirt once they go home. Most are unprintable, but here is one that got a lot of laughs: "Kilo Company: Killed more people than cancer."

The marines at the Government Center have held on, but the fighting has transformed the area into an ocean of ruin. The sentries posted on the rooftops have blasted the larger buildings nearby so many times that they have given them nicknames: Battleship Gray, Swiss Cheese. The buildings are among those that will be bulldozed under the Green Zone plan.

"Aesthetically it will be an improvement," Lt. Col. Stephen Neary said.

Holding the place has cost blood. A roadside bomb killed three marines and a sailor on patrol here in March. Another marine was shot through the forehead by a sniper, just beneath the line of his helmet.

The number of Iraqi casualties — insurgents or civilians — is unknown and impossible to determine in the chaotic conditions.

As in the rest of Iraq, the insurgents' most lethal weapon is the homemade bomb. The bombs virtually cover Ramadi: an American military map on display here showed about 50 places where roadside bombs had recently been discovered. Two weeks ago a marine sniper was killed by a homemade bomb when he ran from a house where he had been spotted.

Bombs Nearly Everywhere

Sometimes it feels as if the bombs are everywhere. On a single hourlong patrol one night last week, a group of marines spotted two likely bombs planted in an area that is regularly inspected, meaning that they had been laid within the previous few days.

One was hidden under a pile of trash. Another was thought to be under a pair of gasoline cans that had been set in the middle of the road. The marines spied them with their night vision glasses; without them, it is likely that the Humvees would have run over them.

Indeed, the marines often manage to spot bombs — covered in trash, made of metal and wires — in streets that are themselves covered in trash, metal and wires.

"Right there, look at that," Gunnery Sgt. John Scroggins said from the passenger seat of his Humvee, pointing to the street.

And there it was: a thin metal tube, with a long green wire protruding and sticking into the pavement, almost certainly a bomb. The pipes typically contain what is called a pressure trigger, which closes an

electrical circuit — and detonates a bomb — when crushed by a vehicle. The Humvee was about two feet away when the marines spotted it.

Some of the marines have been hit by so many bombs that they almost shrug when they go off. On Sunday a Humvee carrying four marines on a patrol dropped off a reporter and photographer for The New York Times at the Government Center. The Humvee rumbled 100 yards down the road and struck a bomb. No one was killed, and the marines returned to base as if they had encountered nothing more serious than a fender bender.

"It's my fifth," said Cpl. Jonathan Nelson, 21, of Brooklyn. "It's the best feeling in the world to get hit by one and live — like bungee jumping."

In the end, whether the Americans can succeed in bringing security to Ramadi will depend on how much support they can draw from the Iraqis.

Many Iraqi civilians have spent the last three years caught between the two warring camps, too afraid to throw their lot with one group or the other. It is, by nearly all accounts, a miserable situation, with individual Iraqis often simultaneously under threat by insurgents and under suspicion by the Americans.

Many complain of bad treatment and unjustified killings by both sides. That civilians have been killed here is beyond dispute, but the circumstances are nearly impossible to verify.

Qais Mohammed, 46, owned a dress shop across the street from the Government Center but moved away when the Americans set up and the fighting began. Then a mortar shell hit his home and he moved with his wife and 10 children to a refugee camp outside the city.

Fed up with conditions at the camp, Mr. Mohammed and his family moved back to the city not long ago, into a seedy little place much reduced from the comfort he once knew.

"We do not want gold, or dresses or the food of kings," Mr. Mohammed said. "We want to live without fear for our lives and our kids. These days neither your tribe nor the police can protect you. It is the jungle law."

The marines say their highest priority is winning over people like Mr. Mohammed, even at the cost of letting insurgents escape. Indeed, the marines seem far less aggressive than they were during their earlier tours here, when the priority was killing insurgents. Now they seem much more interested in capturing the loyalty of the residents.

Civilians in the Middle

Iraqi civilians, by and large, did not seem to fear the American marines as they passed on patrol. When the Americans rumbled past, the Iraqis often continued whatever they were doing: talking, sitting, standing, eating. The children held up their hands for soccer balls, and occasionally a marine would toss one to a child.

"Football! Football!" the children cried.

"The people are in the middle, between us and the insurgents," Lance Cpl. Sean Patton said as he wheeled his Humvee through a neighborhood downtown. (He says he is a great-great-grandnephew of Gen. George S. Patton.) "Whoever is friendly, they will help."

A few moments later, Corporal Patton and his men were reminded of just how bewildering this city could be. As he turned slowly down a street, all the Iraqis milling about, maybe 30 people in all, suddenly disappeared.

"They're going to hit us," the corporal said, convinced that the crowd had been tipped off to the presence of a bomb or an impending attack.

When the Americans left the street, the Iraqis returned.

Corporal Patton turned onto the street again, and the people vanished a second time.

"We're going to get hit," he said, bracing himself.

The attack never came.

Lighter Touch in Ramadi

By Julian E. Barnes, Times Staff Writer
July 12, 2006

RAMADI, Iraq — This is the anti-Fallouja strategy.

Here, in the capital of Al Anbar province, the U.S. military is attempting to clear and pacify an insurgent stronghold without leveling the city in the process.

In November 2004, U.S. forces surrounded Fallouja, set up checkpoints at every road and worked to empty the area of its civilian population. They then moved in and cleared every house and block. The effort destroyed large swaths of the city and forced a massive reconstruction effort.

This time, U.S. forces hope to avoid such drastic measures.

Rather than gauge success by blocks cleared, military officials here take heart from softer measurements — neighborhoods that have become safe enough for garbage collection to have resumed, stores that have reopened.

"When we did Fallouja, everything shut down," said Army Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV, the chief spokesman for U.S. forces in Iraq. "In Ramadi, it is the exact opposite. Shops are opening up and commerce is increasing."

With both Al Qaeda and Sunni nationalist groups intent on asserting influence over Ramadi, the military cannot afford to draw down its forces in the city.

"The trap lines, the foreign fighter flow from Syria to Baghdad, goes right through Ramadi," Caldwell said.

Yet, the seemingly fragile Iraqi government would be unlikely to allow a Fallouja-style assault, particularly in Ramadi, which has 400,000 residents.

Military officials believe Fallouja showed that the United States would not tolerate an insurgent safe haven in Iraq. In Ramadi, they hope to show that a city known as a primary battleground can be retaken with a softer approach.

Ramadi has long been contentious. The conflict grew far worse after insurgents fleeing Fallouja relocated here in late 2004.

Since then the violence has flared and ebbed. U.S. military commanders claimed to have made progress in 2005, but saw their gains blown away by a bombing in January that killed about 60 Iraqi police recruits.

In June, when the 1st Armored Division began moving in, large sections of the city were difficult to enter, the roads mined with improvised explosive devices and snipers taking pot shots from nearby buildings, said Lt. Col. Pete Lee, the executive officer of the division's 1st Brigade.

"There were parts of central Ramadi coalition forces just did not go," he said.

Residents responded to the buildup of American troops by packing up. Thousands fled, worried that a massive assault was coming, residents say.

The Marines begged residents to stay.

"We sent out patrols and said, 'Do not leave your homes, we will protect you,'" said Capt. Max Barela, the Lima Company commander in west-central Ramadi. "They were expecting a Fallouja-

style clearing. It did not play out that way. We want people in their houses and living their lives."

Rather than a direct assault, the goal in Ramadi, officials say, is to shrink the insurgent-dominated areas by creating a ring of combat outposts around the center of the city. The approach uses tactics honed last year by the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment in the much-smaller city of Tall Afar, near the Syrian border.

Making the population feel more secure is key in fighting an insurgency. In west-central Ramadi, Barela's efforts are focused on gauging how safe the residents feel and trying to understand what he can do to make them feel safer.

In parts of the city, those efforts have a long way to go. Although the military appears to have convinced many residents that a massive assault is not in the making, a large number blame the United States for the chaos and violence here.

IRAQ: Restrained Ramadi offensive suggests US charm

04 Jul 2006 14:01:23 GMT

Source: IRIN

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RAMADI, 4 July (IRIN) - Hundreds of families returned to the city of Ramadi, some 110km west of the capital, Baghdad, two weeks after the US military launched an unusually restrained offensive there.

"Residents began returning to Ramadi after being informed by those who had remained behind that US troops were not targeting civilians," said Ahmed Barak, a spokesperson for the Iraqi Aid Association (IAA).

On 19 June, thousands of US and Iraqi troops descended on Ramadi in the restive western Anbar governorate with the ostensible aim of restoring stability. Insurgents had reportedly been in control of much of the densely populated city, in which street battles remain common.

While there were no instances of substantial property destruction, some shops and buildings were reportedly damaged during clashes between US-led forces and insurgents. According to the Iraqi Ministry of Defence, some 70 suspected insurgents were arrested over the course of the operation.

According to Barak, while about 1,500 families fled Ramadi in advance of the attack, more than 1,000 families have since returned. "Returnees received some assistance while they were displaced, but this was only for a short period," said Barak. "And those that have returned say they're being well-treated by the US and Iraqi militaries in Ramadi."

Local doctors, meanwhile, say there were no civilian casualties during the course of the offensive, while residents say that US and Iraqi troops – unlike in previous episodes – behaved respectfully.

"We didn't flee our home because US troops didn't tell us to leave," said Ramadi resident Muhammad Gazi, 55. "They knocked at our door and politely asked permission to enter – we were absolutely astonished."

US military sources say that this approach is part of a strategy of adopting more culturally sensitive tactics when dealing with local populations. As part of the new charm offensive, US marines have also begun repairing some of Ramadi's water-purification and power plants. "For the first time, US troops have started getting the Iraqi people on their side," said Barak. "Locals are generally afraid of them, but a kind word can do a lot to end violence."

Residents, meanwhile, hope that the restraint shown by the US military will become the rule rather than the exception. "I hope the methods used by the US military in the Ramadi offensive will also be employed in other parts of Iraq," said Fuad Rabia'a, a Ramadi shopkeeper who recently returned to work, "and that courtesy and goodwill will become characteristics of US troops so that fewer civilians will die."

AS/AR/AM

US, Iraqi troops raid hospital to hunt insurgents

Jul 5, 2006 — BAGHDAD (Reuters) - U.S. and Iraqi forces raided a hospital in the Sunni insurgent stronghold of Ramadi west of Baghdad on Wednesday, saying it was being used as a safe haven for rebel fighters to launch mortar and sniper attacks on them.

U.S. forces have a cordon with checkpoints around Ramadi, a city of 400,000. Ramadi has emerged as the biggest hotspot in Iraq after a major U.S. military offensive in 2004 in nearby Falluja.

The hospital in northern Ramadi was a center of insurgent activity and had "also been the scene of murders and intimidation against the people of Ramadi by terrorists," said Colonel Sean MacFarland, the U.S. commander in Ramadi.

"Since our arrival in Ramadi four months ago, insurgents have used the Saddam Hospital compound to launch mortar attacks ... as well as shoot at us from the upper stories of the hospital," Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Neary of the 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment said in a statement.

Neary said the aim of the operation was to deny insurgents use of the hospital and to allow the return of Iraqi police to their former post in the hospital.

MacFarland said soldiers would leave the hospital "as soon as possible." Extensive planning had been conducted to ensure health care continued to be provided, he added.

U.S. and Iraqi forces are focusing on depriving rebels of positions used to launch attacks in the city, where a mix of Saddam Hussein loyalists and Islamic militants are believed to be behind the insurgency. Iraqi officials say the city has seen a recent surge in "terrorist" activity.

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